

Office of the **INDIANA** ATTORNEY GENERAL

Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter created the Patient Abuse and Neglect program to protect vulnerable Hoosiers – patients in nursing homes, homes for the disabled, assisted living residences, homes for the mentally ill and other residential care facilities. These patients are often defenseless to the quiet yet shocking crimes of abuse and neglect. Abused or neglected patients are almost always completely dependent on their assailants. They are usually unable or afraid to complain. The attorney general has a select staff whose sole duty is investigating patient abuse and neglect. They need your help – and you can help by following two simple steps:

- 1. Learn the signs of abuse and neglect.**
- 2. Call for help.**

Patient **ABUSE & NEGLECT**



Attorney General Steve Carter
Working for Justice in Indiana



Office of the Indiana Attorney General
Patient Abuse & Neglect

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STEP 1: LEARN THE SIGNS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

Physical Abuse

- **An injury that is not immediately reported to the patient's family.** A caretaker responsible for an injury is strongly tempted to hide the injury from the patient's family.
- **A burn of any kind.** Patients should never be burned or scalded. Caretakers should guarantee that a patient's environment is free of burn-risk.
- **Multiple bruises of similar shape.** Repeated strikes with a belt, electrical cord or other objects usually cause similarly shaped bruises.
- **Nonreaction to pain.** Patients who are repeatedly subjected to physical abuse may eventually stop showing any outward reaction or response.

Theft of Pain Medication

- **Damaged pain patches.** Some drug-seeking caretakers steal medications directly off of their patient's body.
- **Noticeable changes in the amount of pain medication reportedly administered to a patient.** Drug-seeking caretakers sometimes hide the theft of painkillers by falsely recording that the drug was administered to a patient.
- **Obviously impaired caretakers.** Drug-seeking caretakers will attempt to continue working even when they are under the influence of drugs.

Emotional Abuse

- **Passive or withdrawn patients.** A patient who suddenly becomes passive or withdrawn may be fearful of caretakers.

- **Verbal insults and threats.** A caretaker you observe threatening or insulting a patient you do not know is probably also willing to threaten or insult your senior relative when you are not there.
- **Physically isolated patients.** Caretakers are not allowed to isolate patients from social interaction with other patients and other caretakers.
- **Fearful or cowering patients.** Patients fearful to be alone with a caretaker might have suffered verbal or physical abuse at the caretaker's hands.

Patient Neglect

- **Weight loss and weight gain.** Every substantial change in weight should have a medical explanation.
- **Poor dental care.** A lack of dental care can lead to other, more serious medical problems.
- **Poor physical hygiene.** Cleanliness is absolutely essential to good health.
- **Pressure sores that do not heal.** Pressure sores are almost always avoidable and curable.
- **Torn or dirty clothes.** A facility that does not have adequate resources to properly care for patients may do the laundry less frequently.
- **Unusual requests for food, such as begging for something to eat or asking for food immediately after a served meal.** Busy caretakers may fail to notice that a patient has lost the ability to get food from a plate to his mouth.

STEP 2: CALL FOR HELP.

Call 911. No one needs police protection more than those who are unable to protect themselves. If you witness patient abuse or neglect with your own eyes, call 911. If you see bruises or other injuries that look like they may have resulted from abuse, call 911. Do not hesitate to call the police merely because the crime occurs in a residential care facility. A victim's advanced age and poor health are no excuse for a physical attack.

If you think a situation needs further investigation, call the Indiana Attorney General's Abuse and Neglect hotline toll free at **800.382.1039**.

We have more information on patient abuse and neglect. You can reach us by phone at **800.382.1039** or visit us at www.AttorneyGeneral.IN.gov